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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 001406

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI), WHA/CCA, AND DRL/IRF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [CU](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [CU](#) [VT](#) [VTPREL](#)

SUBJECT: HOLY SEE'S PASSIVE APPROACH TO GOC DISSIDENT  
CRACKDOWN

REF: A) STATE 75175 B) VATICAN 195

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JIM NICHOLSON, REASON E.O. 12958 1.5 (B) AND  
(D)

[11.](#) (C) DCM CONVEYED REF (A) DEMARCHE CONCERNING THE CUBAN  
GOVERNMENT'S ONGOING DISSIDENT CRACKDOWN MARCH 26 TO DEPUTY  
FOREIGN MINISTER PIETRO PAROLIN. PAROLIN INDICATED THE HOLY  
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SEE WAS FOLLOWING THE CRACKDOWN WITH CONCERN, AND WOULD  
CLOSELY REVIEW THE U.S. POINTS. POLOFF FOLLOWED UP MARCH 28  
WITH MFA CUBAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR MONS. GIORGIO LINGUA, WHO  
STRESSED THAT THE HOLY SEE WAS IN A "SPECIAL SITUATION"  
VIS-A-VIS CUBA BECAUSE OF ITS NEED TO PROTECT THE VULNERABLE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH PRESENCE THERE (REF B). LINGUA POINTED OUT  
THAT THE HOLY SEE'S TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO UNHRC COUNTRY  
RESOLUTIONS WAS TO STAY AWAY FROM DIRECT ENGAGEMENT.  
CONSEQUENTLY, THE HOLY SEE WOULD NOT ENGAGE ACTIVELY FOR A  
UNHRC RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE RECENT CUBAN GOVERNMENT  
CRACKDOWN ON POLITICAL DISSIDENTS. HE ASSURED US, HOWEVER,  
THAT "IF ANOTHER COUNTRY CAME TO SEEK OUR OPINION, WE WOULD  
CERTAINLY UNDERScore THE UNACCEPTABILITY OF CASTRO'S RECENT  
ACTION."

[12.](#) (C) REGARDING THE CONTENTS OF A UNHRC RESOLUTION, LINGUA  
URGED THAT ANY SUCH RESOLUTION CONTAIN SOME CONSTRUCTIVE  
COMMENT SUCH AS NOTING THE CASTRO REGIME'S PERMISSION FOR  
OSVALDO PAYA TO TRAVEL TO EUROPE TO RECEIVE A HUMAN RIGHTS  
AWARD. AS FOR PUBLICLY CALLING FOR RELEASE OF THE IMPRISONED  
ACTIVISTS, LINGUA SAID THAT HOLY SEE GENERALLY DOES NOT ISSUE  
PUBLIC APPEALS, BUT WOULD WORK QUIETLY AND DIRECTLY WITH  
THOSE INVOLVED TO REMEDY THE SITUATION. ASKED IF THAT MEANT  
THE HOLY SEE WOULD INSTRUCT ITS NUNCIO IN HAVANA TO ENGAGE,  
HE DEMURRED. IN THIS REGARD, LINGUA (PROTECT) CONVEYED HIS  
PERSONAL CHAGRIN THAT THE NUNCIO APPEARS TO HAVE "GIVEN UP ON  
POLITICAL CHANGE UNDER THE CASTRO REGIME." HE ADDED THAT  
CARDINAL ORTEGA'S RECENT STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE CRACKDOWN  
(AND, WITH A SOP TO THE REGIME, DECRYING OUTSIDE  
INTERFERENCE) WOULD HAVE TO DO FOR NOW.

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[13.](#) (C) ACCORDING TO LINGUA, THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES THE CUBAN  
CLERGY SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON CHURCH BUSINESS AND AVOID  
ANTAGONIZING THE CASTRO REGIME IN ORDER TO AVERT ANY FURTHER  
REPRESSION ON THE CHURCH. IN AN EARLY MARCH CONVERSATION,  
LINGUA TOLD POLOFF THAT CARDINAL ORTEGA IS TRYING TO BALANCE  
SUCH "SOFT PRESSURE" ON THE GOC FOR GREATER RELIGIOUS  
FREEDOM, AGAINST MORE THE OVERT POLITICAL ACTIVISM OF BISHOP  
GONZALEZ OF PINAR DEL RIO. AT THAT TIME LINGUA FEARED THAT  
THE CASTRO GOVERNMENT MIGHT MOVE AGAINST BISHOP GONZALEZ IF  
HE BECAME TOO "PROVOCATIVE" IN HIS SUPPORT OF DISSIDENT  
ACTIVISTS. LINGUA WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT CARDINAL  
ORTEGA'S STRONG PASTORAL LETTER DENOUNCING THE CONTINUING  
LACK OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN CUBA, AND CHARACTERIZED ORTEGA  
AS "COURAGEOUS" AND THE LETTER AS EVIDENCE THAT ORTEGA IS  
"LOSING TRUST" IN THE GOC'S ABILITY TO LOOSEN CONTROLS ON THE  
CHURCH.

[14.](#) (C) LINGUA EXHORTED THE U.S. TO BE CAUTIOUS IN HOW IT  
PROMOTES CHANGE IN CUBA, OBSERVING THAT HE WAS SURPRISED THAT  
USINT HAD BECOME SO ENERGETIC IN MEETING WITH DISSIDENTS,  
PROVIDING BOOKS AND SPEAKING PUBLICLY. HE NOTED THAT PRIOR  
TO THE RECENT CRACKDOWN, THERE APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN SOME  
IMPROVEMENT IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, NOTABLY AN  
INCREASING AWARENESS AMONG CUBAN CITIZENS OF THEIR RIGHTS AND  
AN GREATER SENSE OF CIVIC ACTIVISM AMONG SOME -- PARTICULARLY  
AS A RESULT OF THE VARELA PROJECT. FOR THE CHURCH, HOWEVER,  
HE BELIEVED THE SITUATION HAD ACTUALLY GOTTEN WORSE COMPARED  
TO LAST YEAR. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE OPENING OF THE  
BRIGITINE CONVENT (SEPTEL), THE CHURCH HADN'T MADE ANY  
PROGRESS OBTAINING GOC PERMISSION TO DEEPEN AND EXPAND ITS  
ACTIVITIES. THE HOLY SEE CONTINUES TO FEAR THAT THE CHURCH  
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IN CUBA REMAINS VULNERABLE TO RETRIBUTION FOR THE POLITICAL  
ACTIVISM OF SOME DISSIDENTS WHO OPENLY ASSOCIATED WITH IT.

[15.](#) (C) COMMENT: DESPITE THE HOLY SEE'S COMPLETE REJECTION OF

THE ONGOING CUBAN ACTIONS, THE HESITATION TO SPEAK OUT PUBLICLY REFLECTS THE INNATE CAUTION OF THE HOLY SEE'S SECRETARIAT OF STATE IN TAKING ACTIONS AGAINST REPRESSIVE

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REGIMES THAT ARE ABLE TO MAKE LIFE DIFFICULT FOR VULNERABLE CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES. WHILE THE VATICAN IS TROUBLED AND ANGERED BY CASTRO'S SUPPRESSION OF DISSIDENTS AND CRITICISM OF USINT COM CASON, THEIR REACTION IS TO KEEP THEIR HEADS DOWN AND WORK QUIETLY BEHIND THE SCENES. LINGUA TOLD US THERE ARE CUBAN DISSIDENTS WHO "TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CHURCH TO PROMOTE THEIR POLITICS" SUCH AS DAGOBERTO VALDEZ, AND OTHERS, LIKE OSVALDO PAYA, WHO "ACT AS (GOOD) LAY CATHOLICS."

LINGUA'S PREFERENCE FOR QUIET GAINS OVER THE LONG TERM FITS WELL WITH AN INSTITUTION THAT FEELS IT HAS MUCH TO LOSE IF IT TAKES A FALSE STEP. EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS U.S. CONCERNS ON THE CRACKDOWN, ESPECIALLY WITH FM TAURAN, WHO, AS AN OLD CSCE/OSCE HAND, HAS A SOLID UNDERSTANDING OF THE BENEFITS OF A STRONG AND PUBLIC APPROACH TO CALLING FOR

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ACTION EUR-00

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| INFO | LOG-00  | NP-00   | AMAD-00 | CIAE-00 | INL-00  | DODE-00 | WHA-00 |
|      | DS-00   | FBIE-00 | VC-00   | TEDE-00 | INR-00  | LAB-01  | VCE-00 |
|      | NSAE-00 | PA-00   | SSO-00  | SS-00   | DSCC-00 | PRM-00  | DRL-01 |
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INFO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
USINT HAVANA PRIORITY

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